Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
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on the GO

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Cruise ship terminal latest success story for Campbell River Indian Band

North America's only First Nations-themed cruise ship terminal is just the latest chapter in the Campbell River Indian Band's nearly 10-year record as a driving force for economic development on northern Vancouver Island.

When it opens in September 2006, the Campbell River Cruise Ship Terminal will be an international port of call for cruise ships, bringing in travellers from around the world and flowing millions of dollars into the local economy. The government of Canada is investing $9 million for construction of the terminal, which will be able to accommodate the largest cruise ships in the industry.

The Band has initiated a number of major projects since the early 1990s which have benefitted the First Nation while creating opportunities for neighbouring communities. As a result, the band has played a significant role in the growth and development of the region and is now its largest employer.

"We can no longer rely solely on fishing and logging to support our community," says Campbell River Indian Band economic development officer Jodee Dick. "It was necessary for us to begin looking at alternatives to create a positive, sustainable economy and future for our people."

With the capital generated from its many projects, the band has been able to pursue additional economic opportunities and further improve community infrastructure and housing.

The development of a marina for recreational and commercial vehicles in the late 1990s was the band's first highly successful project. Then, in 1997, the Band negotiated with four major retail companies - Canadian Tire, Zellers, Canadian Superstore and Staples - to anchor its Discovery Harbour Shopping Centre.

"The Campbell River economy was really depressed at the time. Canadian Tire was the first store to sign on and the employment opportunities it provided really helped stabilize the community's economy," says Dick.

The band is currently in negotiations that would see two more big box stores built and opened by December 2006 on band land. In preparation for the projects, a feasibility study was conducted that indicated that $57 million in retail dollars flow out of the north island region annually.

See Project Successes — page 2

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From page 1 — Project Successes a Source of Community Pride

The welcoming pole at Discovery Harbour Shopping Centre, an Campbell River Indian Band development, incorporates aspects of their culture.

The addition of the two stores will help solidify Campbell River as hub for shopping in the region and bring those dollars back into the community.

"The success of our projects gives the community something to be proud of," says Chief Robert Pollard. It's also created a sense of hope and promise that has prompted some band members who are living off-reserve to return to the First Nation community.

Approximately half the band's population of 600 lives off-reserve. In 2005, the band created the infrastructure for 61 new housing lots and has a waiting list for another 80.

Pollard attributes the success of the Campbell River Indian Band's economic development efforts to strong and consistent band leadership. "We are fortunate that over the years all of our councils have been committed to honouring the goals and priorities of the community," he says.

"The band council has helped ensure the success of our multi-million dollar projects by employing effective business practices," adds Dick. "Our boards of directors are highly capable and we have stable corporate structures."

Camp Ignites Aboriginal Youth's Interest in IT

Sixteen Aboriginal youth attended a camp last summer in Vancouver to learn about computers, but they also opened the door to the possibilities of new technology for themselves and their communities.

The IBM IGNITE camps, launched this year in several locations across Canada, encourage youth to explore careers in science and technology. In BC, the camps are sponsored by the First Nations Technology Council (FNTC) and IBM. Another camp was held in the Interior in the fall, with 18 kids from Ktunaxa Nation attending. A third camp will be held in 2006.

The camps illustrate how industry, First Nations organizations and governments can cooperate to help First Nations youth and communities realize their potential. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada participates in these types of partnerships to support First Nations' skill development and improve the education outcomes of Aboriginal learners in BC.

"Our goal is to encourage children to stay in school," says Rukhsana Syed, IBM's kindergarten to Grade 12 program manager. "With an education that includes math and science they will be able to follow any road they want. We hope that eventually there will be an increased number of Aboriginal people working in the technology sector."

"Forward thinking First Nations leaders are encouraging their youth to get technology training so they will be able to support the technical environment all communities need," says Sue Hanley, technology coordinator for the FNTC.

New technology offers many possibilities to First Nations communities, which are often in geographically isolated locations, she explains. For example, high-speed Internet can provide online access to distance education and health care, support the development of business opportunities, and help preserve indigenous languages and culture.

Judging from the enthusiasm and skill of the kids at the Vancouver camp, Aboriginal communities are well positioned to reap the benefits new technology offers.

Leanna Wilson, (left) and Ramsie Speck, both 14, work on a computer during the IGNITE Camp.

"Learning to build a Web page was pretty cool," says 10-year-old Abigail Speck from the Musqueam First Nation.

Throughout the camp, the budding IT stars built robots out of Lego, took apart computers, and produced Power Point presentations. The campers went on field trips, including a visit to IBM's Burnaby headquarters. They also took home the computers used during the camp, which were were donated by Industry Canada through its Computers for Schools program.

Editor's Note

Over the past few months, water quality issues in First Nation communities have been the subject of significant media attention across the country.

The stories included in this issue of On the Go highlight some made-in-BC solutions to the challenges of maintaining effective and sustainable water and wastewater systems in BC First Nation communities.

It is with great pride that we highlight these successes that are a direct result of the communities' commitment to the health and well-being of their families and neighbours.

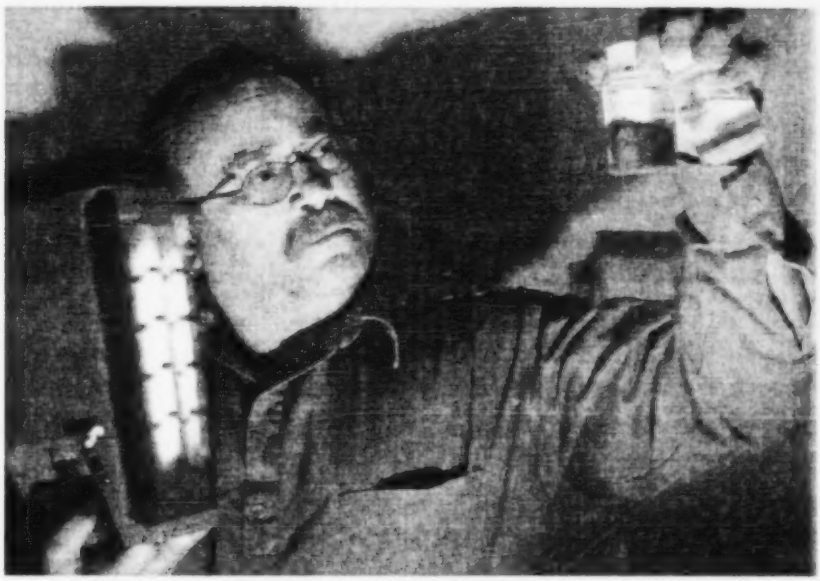
Access to Clean, Reliable Water Essential to Healthy First Nations Communities

Water quality affects us all. Access to clean, reliable water is essential to our health and well-being, and is a foundation of a thriving community.

In non-Aboriginal communities, a municipal authority such as a city or regional district is responsible for providing wastewater services and safe, potable water to consumers. However, in First Nations communities, the Government of Canada and First Nations share the responsibility for ensuring clean, secure water is available and for providing effective wastewater services on-reserve.

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) provides funding to First Nations communities for construction, upgrades, operations and maintenance of on-reserve water and wastewater systems. Health Canada publishes *Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality* and helps First Nations ensure monitoring programs are in place.

First Nations Chiefs and Councils play a key role in ensuring water and wastewater facilities are designed, constructed, maintained and operated in accordance with federal or provincial standards.



Assistant Skidegate water plant operator John Wesley shines an ultraviolet light on water samples to test for coliforms. The glowing jar is a control sample.

In 2003, in consultation with First Nations, INAC and Health Canada developed the First Nations Water Management Strategy (FNWMS) to ensure First Nations communities have access to safe, dependable drinking water and effective wastewater services. The Government of Canada is investing $600 million over five years to improve water and wastewater services on reserves. Funding will be used to provide new and upgraded systems, improve management practices and support the training and certification of operators.

In order to develop the FNWMS, 302 water and 119 wastewater systems serving BC First Nations communities were assessed. Projects are now underway to upgrade or repair systems that were identified as being medium to high risk.

See page 4 for more information on the FNWMS.

The First Nations Water Management Strategy

The strategy supports cleaner, safer water and a better quality of life through:

- Immediate action for systems identified as high and medium risk
- New and upgraded water and wastewater facilities
- Improved management practices including maintenance management plans
- Improved water quality monitoring combined with comprehensive and coordinated compliance and reporting
- An effective and sustainable operation and maintenance program
- Expansion and enhancement of operator training and certification programs
- The development of a set of clearly defined standards and protocols for testing and monitoring drinking water quality

Additional FNWMS Resources

For more information on the FNWMS, visit the Indian and Northern Affairs Canada Web site at: www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/H2O/

For the National Assessment Of Water And Wastewater Systems In First Nations Communities Summary Report see: www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ps/hsg/rth/ci/ic/wq/wawsa/index_e.html

Haida Community Water Quality First Rate

The Haida community of Skidegate in the Queen Charlotte Islands is a model for how strong leadership can help ensure First Nations have access to a clean and reliable source of water. One of the key reasons Skidegate boasts first-rate water quality is that the band council and operators are committed to ensuring the water treatment system is effective and sustainable.

"We're fortunate our leaders have made water a priority," says Diane Brown, former chief councillor and community health representative, who monitored water quality in Skidegate for 28 years.

"When we ask for improvements, the band council is right on the ball, because they know it's necessary," agrees assistant operator John Wesley.

In 1997, with $3 million in funding from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), Skidegate opened a new water treatment plant.

Along with funding construction and upgrades for water and wastewater systems, INAC supports operator training and provincial certification through the First Nations Water Management Strategy.

In Skidegate, the operators play a critical role in ensuring the water treatment system is doing its job. They constantly monitor the treatment system as water is filtered and undergoes chlorine and ultraviolet disinfection.

"The plant is like a living entity — it requires continual upkeep," says Wesley. The operators are on call 24 hours a day and travel around the village every week to collect samples.

Maintenance is especially challenging in a remote community like Skidegate because chemicals must be shipped in by a barge that arrives, at most, once a month.

"The operators do a tremendous amount for the community," said band councillor Amanda Reid-Stevens. "They quietly go about their work, but to us, they're heroes."

The treatment plant operators also help raise awareness by informing the community about water-related issues. Important initiatives include tours of the water treatment plant by kindergarten classes during Sk'aadgaa Naay Elementary's "Water Week."

"It's not just a job," says head operator Johnny Smith. "We're committed to making sure our families and neighbours have clean water to drink and that our community is healthy."

Neighbours Partner on Wastewater Solutions

Old Massett Village Council band administrator Victor Robinson (left) and Mayor Barry Pages stand on the beach they hope to save.

The Haida First Nation community of Old Massett and the Village of Masset are linked by more than a name. The neighbouring communities have always shared resources and coordinated efforts. They use the same schools and post office, and are jointly constructing a hospital. They have drafted a mutual emergency aid agreement, and Masset provides Old Massett Village Council with treated drinking water.

"We're two communities working together for the common good," says Old Massett Village Council band administrator Victor Robinson.

"We're quite integrated," agrees Masset Mayor Barry Pages. "When Old Massett does well, we do well."

Recently, when faced with environmental problems caused by untreated wastewater, the First Nation and their non-Aboriginal neighbours joined forces to find a solution.

Pointing to the nearby inlet, Old Massett Village Council capital works officer John Bennett indicates where his uncle once harvested shellfish, crabs and edible seaweed, and where people baked clams on hot rocks during the summer.

Untreated sewage had been flowing into the bay, where it was believed strong tidal surges would dissipate the waste. Instead, as years passed, it accumulated, and the resulting pollution was beginning to affect the area's marine life.

That will all change by the end of 2006 when wastewater from both communities will be pumped to a new treatment plant. There, it will be aerated in two massive lagoons and a polishing cell, and treated with ultraviolet light. At the end of the 45-day process, the treated wastewater will be released into the ocean.

Funding for the project is being provided by both communities, as well as by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), which is contributing $3.7 million. Old Massett will be responsible for operations and maintenance of the treatment plant, and Masset and Old Massett will negotiate user fees through a municipal-type agreement.

Another example of a partnership successfully addressing wastewater issues can be found on Cormorant Island, near northeast Vancouver Island.

In September 1999, the Namgis First Nation and the town of Alert Bay signed the *Alert Bay Accord*, which calls for shared responsibility for health, recycling, animal control and garbage collection.

"We see the island as a single entity," says Namgis Band administrator George Speck. "If we don't work together, neither one of us will survive."

Like the Massett communities, Cormorant Island faced problems caused by an ineffective wastewater system. Untreated wastewater flowed directly into the ocean, causing the closure of beaches because of high coliform content and negatively affecting the area's two main industries — fishing and tourism.

Working together, and with $3.2 million from INAC, the communities completed the Yalis treatment plant in 2003. Now, wastewater passes through filters leading to five aeration tanks before undergoing ultraviolet and chlorine treatment. Operators check the plant every day to ensure it does its job.

Now that the plant is constructed, the two communities are looking toward further joint ventures.

"This project helped us to cement our relationship," says Alert Bay's chief administrative officer Monique Jeffrey. "It's a wonderful experience to live and work in a community where cooperation and respect are held in such high esteem."

Yalis wastewater treatment plant, completed in 2003, is a joint venture of the Namgis First Nation and the Village of Alert Bay.

Trained and Certified Operators Key to Managing Water Systems

For as long as he can remember, Louie Sabbas has been drawn to water.

At four years old, when the 1964 Alaskan tsunami hit his community, Sabbas and his siblings carried pails of water home from a communal well. Since then, he has become an operator for the Hesquiaht First Nation's water and wastewater systems. He also assists neighbouring operators and works with the non-profit organization Water for People to raise money for water treatment projects in Guatemala.

In 2001, Sabbas, who lives near Hot Springs Cove on Vancouver Island, received the BC Water and Wastewater Association's (BCWWA) annual Vic Terry Award for exemplary service. "Winning the award has helped me realize what I've accomplished over the years," he says.

It is important that BC First Nations communities have well-trained, dedicated operators like Sabbas. Along with repairing leaks and burst pipes during emergencies, operators ensure a community's drinking water is clean and safe and its wastewater is properly treated.

As part of the First Nations Water Management Strategy (FNWMS), Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) supports operator training and provincial certification. Since the strategy was introduced three years ago, 133 operators have been certified and 90 First Nations have at least one certified operator. This has translated into better monitoring and record keeping that contributes to well-run water and wastewater systems in First Nations communities in BC.

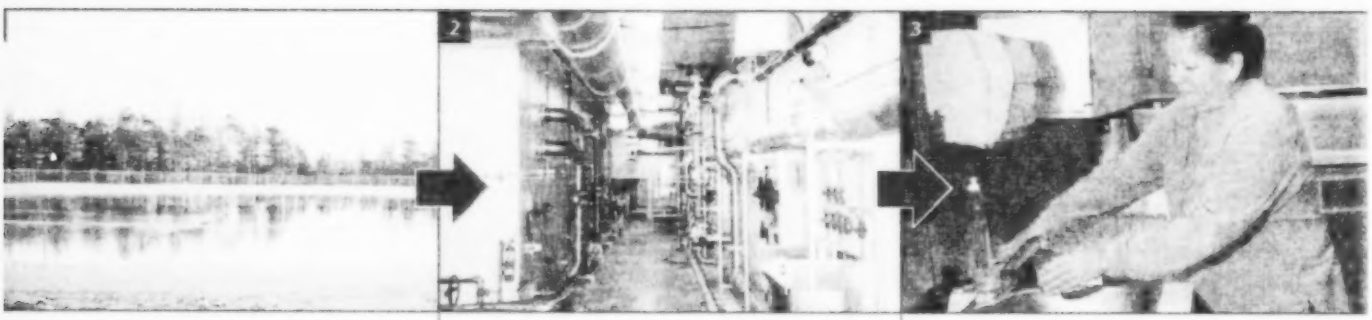
"Communities now have additional resources available to keep the water from their taps clean and reliable," says Jerry Morrison, who supervised water treatment for the Gitanmaax Band near Hazelton for over 25 years. "Since the operators have more training and experience, they have a better understanding of water and wastewater systems."

> "A strong sense of responsibility is the most important trait an operator can have."
>
> — Circuit rider Jerry Morrison

With technology improving so quickly, constant learning is essential. To assist with this, expert operators called circuit riders offer tutoring for courses leading to BCWWA certification. In BC, the Circuit Rider Training Program, which is funded by INAC and administered by First Nations, is available to all First Nations communities. As a circuit rider, Morrison visits communities up to four times a year to provide training to local operators.

"A strong sense of responsibility is the most important trait an operator can have," he says. "It can be frustrating at times, especially in the winter when pipes can burst, but thanks to the dedicated operators, the problems will be fixed."

The Source-to-Tap Cycle



The water we drink comes from a surface or groundwater source — for example, an icy mountain stream, lake or groundwater reservoir. These sources often contain contaminant particles or harmful bacteria that must be removed prior to consumption.

Water is transported from the water source to a water treatment plant. There, it passes through a treatment process that can include filtration and disinfection by chlorination and ultraviolet lights. Treatment plant operators carefully monitor each step of the process.

Once it has been treated, the water is tap-ready. It is transported from the treatment plant to individual households, schools and businesses. Treatment plant operators regularly collect samples from these locations to ensure water quality remains high.

Transition House Lays Groundwork for Healthy Communities

In the gently rolling hills near Penticton overlooking Okanagan Lake, a converted duplex is a symbol of hope for the Okanagan Nation.

The Okanagan Nation Transition Emergency House (ONTEH) provides First Nations women and children access to culturally appropriate healing, counselling and employment programs in a safe, secure environment.

A fundamental principal of ONTEH is that it works with members of the client's family to assist healing. A staff composed of First Nations people helps clients feel at ease.

> "There's a growing awareness of the direct link between social well-being and successful economic and business development."
>
> — Chief Stewart Phillip

"There are a lot of off-reserve safe houses," says Margaret Eli, president of the Okanagan Nation Family Intervention and Services Society (ONFISS). "But often people in our community won't access them, because they don't feel comfortable. They feel safer here."

ONETH was developed through the combined efforts of the seven bands of the Okanagan Nation and is situated in the Penticton Band community which is centrally located.

"There's a growing awareness of the direct link between social well-being and successful economic and business development," says Chief Stewart Phillip of the Penticton Band. "If we hope to build a strong, prosperous community we need to ensure the community is filled with healthy, happy families."

The women in the community led the planning for the centre, says Chief Phillip. They held grassroots meetings to discuss the community's social problems, and then assembled volunteers and lobbied for the funding.

In 2003, the First Nation received a grant from the Aboriginal Healing Foundation. The grant was used to convert a duplex (provided by the Penticton Band) into the bright and comfortable transition house it is now. Community members donated sofas, televisions, tables and toys. Rooms were repainted and fridges stocked.

ONTEH was launched in August 2004 and its current Aboriginal client base has been increasing since then. Services have expanded to include outreach programs on self-esteem issues, communication skills and family law advocacy.

To manage operating costs, staff turned to a variety of funding sources — from letter-writing campaigns to local bottle drives, raffles and flea markets. Workers donated time and off-reserve transition houses offered training and advice.

Government funding kicked in six months ago with contributions from both Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and the BC provincial government.

> "I believe that the essence of success rests on our ability and willingness to take ownership of the issue."
>
> — Chief Stewart Phillip

In October 2005, the facility's eight employees joined more than 40 former clients and supporters in a first anniversary commemoration ceremony. Along with recognizing staff, volunteers and funding agencies, the ceremony presented visions for the future, including plans to develop similar facilities in other locations.

"I believe that the essence of success rests on our ability and willingness to take ownership of the issue," says Chief Phillip. "This project demonstrates what can happen when we deal with our issues."

Online Resources

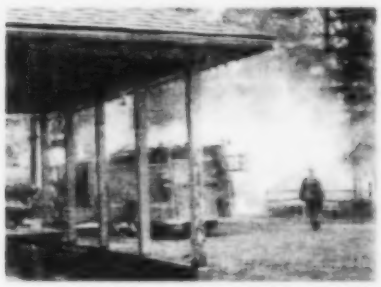
For more news and information on Indian and Northern Affairs Canada initiatives, visit our Web site at: www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/bc/

Issues of *On the Go* can also be viewed online at: www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/nr/nwltr/otg/index_e.html

Communities Address Beetle Infestation and Related Forest Fire Risks

British Columbia's Mountain Pine Beetle infestation threatens more than just the province's forestry industry. The dead trees also create potential fire hazard that could put lives and homes in danger.

Up to 71 First Nation communities in BC could be affected by the beetles. To manage this situation, the federal and provincial governments and the First Nations Emergency Services Society (FNESS) are working with BC First Nations to implement solutions.



"A new federal Mountain Pine Beetle program is aimed at addressing the beetle infestation and related fire hazards on federal Crown lands that put both First Nations and non-First Nations communities at risk. A portion of the program will fund BC First Nations to manage and reduce the spread of the beetles on reserves, and restore and rehabilitate affected forestlands," says FNESS manager Dan Murphy.

Also as a result of a provincial review of the catastrophic fire season of 2003, the BC Ministry of Forests and Range and the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) are assisting communities throughout the province to develop strategic plans to improve forest fire prevention. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada is partnering with the Ministry of Forest and Range Protection Branch, the UBCM and the Canadian Forest Service to deliver those same services to First Nations in BC.

Harry Spahan, who is from the Coldwater Indian band, is working with FNESS to manage the federal pine beetle program. Having worked for the Ministry of Forests and Range for 27 years, Spahan's considerable experience and knowledge will assist First Nations in developing their comprehensive fire management plans. Spahan will also help streamline coordination between federal and provincial programs and assist First Nations to apply for the funding available through the federal pine beetle program.

Several First Nations communities have applied for federal pine beetle program funding and projects are under way.

Ceremony Honours First Nations Firefighters

A firefighter sees a lot in 25 years.

Lax Kw'Alaams Fire Chief James Henry has seen many buildings go up in flames. He has watched his crew grow from a half dozen volunteers to 16 dedicated firefighters.

And finally, this year Henry saw his long years of service recognized at an awards ceremony in Kamloops organized by British Columbia's First Nations' Emergency Services Society (FNESS). It was the first time that First Nations firefighters who are based on reserves have been recognized for their contributions.

Henry joined nine other First Nations firefighters, in September 2006, to receive a Long Service Medal for 25 or more years of service from BC Lieutenant Governor Iona Campagnolo, who also awarded five Federal Medals for 20-24 years of service.

"I take my hat off to each and every one of you," FNESS Director Edwin Mountain said at the ceremony. "Be proud. Because I am proud of you and proud of how long you've stuck with this."

Along with battling fires, Henry's crew answers 400 other emergency calls a year — an invaluable service for a community 33 miles north of Prince Rupert, accessible only by boat or plane.

First Nations firefighters are trained by FNESS, a non-profit society which is primarily funded by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. "FNESS supports First Nations emergency services and helps communities protect their assets," says FNESS CEO Dan Murphy. Along with fire safety programs, FNESS provides emergency response, crisis intervention and environmental services.

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